

KOL TODA



Gateways to Gratitude: Giving Thanks to Hashem

THE KINDNESS IN EVERY KERNEL

These wondrous spring days are all part of a series of days that the Torah directs us to count. Beginning on the second evening of Pesach we count each day until the forty-ninth day, on the eve of Shavuot. Every day we count an additional day: "Nine days since the Omer", "Ten days since the Omer". Why is this Korban Omer offering that was sacrificed on the second day of Pesach, so significant? How is it connected to counting the days to receiving the Torah?

Upon investigating halachic sources, the question becomes even more pronounced. According to most halachic opinions, counting the Omer today is no longer a Torah proscribed commandment but a rabbinic one, since the sacrifices of Omer and the Two Breads (brought on Shavuot) are no longer practiced since we have no Temple. Why is the counting linked to the sacrifices?

The actual mitzvah of counting the Omer as is described in the Torah also requires explanation. The Torah (Devarim 16) describes the counting as being from the beginning of the harvest "from when the sickle is first put to the standing crop", to its end "when you present an offering in accordance to the blessing that Hashem has granted you". What is the significance of counting the days of the harvest?

The time of the Omer is unquestionably the most glorious time of year. The flowers are blooming, the air is fresh and clean, butterflies flit from flower to flower and the world is alive, fresh and vibrant. The weather is most pleasant and the Midrash

tells us that before The Flood, the weather in the world was like this all year round – "as it is from Pesach to Shavuot." It is the time when the earth's bounty is harvested, and G-d's gifts are most apparent, the earth gives forth

grain, the mainstay of our diet. It is the time to look around and appreciate all of Hashem's delightful gifts.

Sefer Hachinuch (mitzvah 302) tells us that the basis of the mitzvah of the Omer-Offering is: "By means of this mitzvah we will appreciate the great kindness of G-d to provide us with new

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grain every year, for our sustenance. Therefore it is proper to bring a sacrifice of it to G-d so we will remember His kindness before partaking of it, and

thereby becoming worthy that our grain will be blessed and G-d's desire to benefit His creatures will be fulfilled".

When the Beit HaMikdash was standing in Jerusalem, A Jew would come there on Pesach and thank G-d for the beginning of the harvest on the second day of Pesach with the sacrifice of the Omer. Then, he went home and harvested his grain, bringing in G-d's bounty from the fields, all the while counting the days when he would return to the Beit HaMikdash to thank G-d with the sacrifice of the Two Breads at the conclusion of the harvest. This stimulates him to see and feel Hashem's blessings in his everyday life, in his stalks of wheat and barley. All the grain he will harvest will be harvested with a song of gratitude in his heart and on his lips.

This is the kind of toil for livelihood that is beloved by Hashem, work that is done with appreciation and gratitude. That is what will bring the world to its final aspired objective. G-d wants us to employ and exercise our gratitude emotions to their fullest extent during this time of year, each and every day, in order to see G-d's amazing kindness in each stalk of wheat and every kernel.

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TZADDIKIM THANK HASHEM

Rabbi Avigdor Miller and Appreciation

Rabbi Avigdor Miller was known for the unlimited inspiration he gained from observing and appreciating every facet of creation. He revealed to those close to him that he once meditated on a flower for some length of time. As a result of this he achieved a major elevation in his relationship to Hashem.

When he passed by a flower garden he would stop to appreciate the beauty the G-d had created. He would say: People think that the enjoyment from a garden is the exclusive domain of the owner and the gardener who worked hard to design and plant it. Everyone can gain heart-lifting inspiration from viewing a garden. Stop and look carefully at the beauty of design of each flower, every petal is a stunning work of art. Notice the brilliant artistic contrast of the coloring of the various parts. Breathe in deeply the delightful perfume that was added for our joy. Feel the love of Hashem behind it all!

His favorite drink was a glass of water. Hashem did

not just make our drinking and eating emotionless mechanical actions, resembling a car being refueled; He made these activities most pleasurable. To feel the love and kindheartedness of Hashem that is behind this system, adds a sweetness to the water with which no sweetener can compete.

Passing a fruit shop with him was an elevating experience. Hashem could have designed one black, tasteless orange that has all the necessary vitamins and minerals. Yet Hashem created an innumerable variety of fruits, each with a different taste, texture and color. The one and only reason for this is that He loves us and wants us to be happy.

Rabbi Miller's enthusiasm was contagious. It was an uplifting experience to accompany him walking along the road – the elated perspective on life he radiated, remained with these privileged individuals for a lifetime.

("The Fragrance of Life")



A Word of Gratitude

“Express gratitude to Hashem with every one of your limbs: Not only with your mouth, mind and heart, but also with the rest of your body, every second of the day. When you guard your limbs from doing what Hashem distains – that is a wonderful way of expressing gratitude!”

- Beis Aharon of Karlin (Netiv Hameorot)

A Ray of Light

Dear Readers,

I would like to share a wonderful observation I had. Baruch Hashem we are connected to expressing thankfulness to Hashem for everything. Nevertheless, during difficult times, we sometimes fall into a pit of hopelessness and depression. Yet, if one manages to step out of this gloomy situation and make the effort despite the difficulty involved to express thanks to Hashem, this is appreciated exceedingly in Heaven.

At various times, when I was in a difficult situation, I made a supreme effort to nevertheless give thanks to Hashem. Although at first I felt my gratitude was artificial and without sincerity – if I was dedicated and persistent, I was always able to connect in the end to some level of true thankfulness and feeling of closeness to Hashem. To my astonishment, another marvel invariably followed my expression of gratitude: suddenly we would experience a small yeshua, one that we were not expecting – a long-awaited phone call, a sum of money that came into the bank, one of my children succeeded more than expected. They were like a warm hug from Hashem, a ray of light shining down from Heaven.

Of course, I thanked Hashem not in order to receive reward, but to bring myself closer to Him. But He showed me immediately that my thanks were really appreciated and beloved.

So keep on thanking Hashem, even when the situation is challenging!

May we always merit to cause great Heavenly gratification, and see the loving Hand of Hashem in all our endeavors.



L'Olam Odehka
"Forever will I thank You"



Giving Thanks to Hashem

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